

MODERN FREETHINKER

- ❑ Cleaning up of
'holy' Ganga
—Sanal Edamaruku
- ❑ What should a
Rationalist do ?
—M. V. Ramamurthy
- ❑ Objectives of
Scientific Education
—Dr. H. Narasimhaiah
- ❑ Freethought
—Joseph Edamaruku
- ❑ Secularism under
Indian Constitution
—Justice R.A. Jahagirdar
- ❑ On Positive Atheism
and Negative Atheism
—M. V. Ramamurthy
- ❑ Rationalism as a
Way of Life
—Varkey Shantistan

Join the Indian Rationalist Association

The Indian Rationalist Association is a national organization actively engaged in the building up of an effective rationalist mass movement. Delhi is the headquarters of the association and we have branches in several states.

The Indian Rationalist Association fights religion as it is an exploitative structure. It also fights caste-system, superstitions, blind beliefs and all sorts of exploitation. It strives for the establishment of a new secular culture, parallel to the denounced religious culture. It promotes inter-religious and inter-caste marriages. It highlights scientific temper and spirit of inquiry. While criticising religions and social evils, rationalists are courageous enough to abstain from them also. A rationalist does not practice religion or caste in his personal life.

- If you have already a rationalist group, we request you to make it a branch unit of Indian Rationalist Association so that the efforts for an integrated, coordinated, rationalist movement could be further strengthened by your joining together as an integral part of the national rationalist movement.

If you are an individual rationalist, please take initiative to organize a small group of rationalists. You may explain to other like minded people the aims and objectives of the association. Once the group is formed, make it a part of Indian Rationalist Association. We shall connect you to similar groups working in areas closer to you.

For more details and a copy of the Rules and Regulations of Indian Rationalist Association, please write to

Sanal Edamaruku,
General Secretary
Indian Rationalist Association
Post Box No. 2713
New Delhi 110005.

Modern Freethinker

Modern Freethinker

JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION
Editor : SANAL EDAMARUKU

Editorial

Cleaning up of 'holy' Ganga

The environmental project namely Ganga Action Plan is undoubtedly an important anti-pollution programme. The significance of the project increases as it is being undertaken by an autonomous body under the chairmanship of the prime minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

The very acceptance that 'holy' Ganga is polluted and it needs cleaning is relevant, for the blind belief in the 'Magical Powers' of the Ganga seemed difficult to eradicate. It was only five years ago that the objective criteria to the 'holy' river has been challenged in the highest policy making forum of the country. When the issue of river water pollution was raised in the parliament, the then minister holding charge was emphatic in his reply. He said : "The Ganga could not possibly be polluted; the purifier of song and legend could not itself be in need of purification".

Pollution of river Ganga, however has been assessed by the Central Ganga Authority (CGA). The agenda and notes of the first meeting of the C.G.A. reported : "The Ganga Action Plan is based on the premise that about 75 percent of the pollution of the river Ganga is caused by municipal wastes, in particular, untreated sewage". In another part, the same report continues : "Pollution from industrial sources accounts for about a third of the total pollution load in Uttar Pradesh and a little less in West Bengal and Bihar".

The scheme of this significant environmental project as outlined by the chairman of the Central Board for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution, is as follows. Raw sewage is led to a settling process where solids go to a digester to produce

methane gas and digested solid. The methane gas is fed to a gas turbine to generate electrical power for running the factory, as well as to sell the surplus to other consumers. The digested solid is sold as manure. The liquid from the settling process goes to a biological aerator where more solids are produced and separated to be fed to the digester. The liquid or water from the biological aerator is clean enough to be used for aquaculture where algae and fish are grown. Algae is harvested as poultry feed and fishes are marketed. The water from aquaculture flows out as irrigation water.

The resource recovery plan over the money spent for this gigantic environmental project is also promising. It would not just be a self-sustaining enterprise, but even a profitable one. As conceived, the resource recycling unit will spend Rs. 23 per person per year, and earn Rs. 34 per person per year. In simple terms, for a city with a population of 5 lakhs, the plant would generate an annual profit of Rs. 55 lakhs. If these figures are based on systematic home work and scientific computing, the sewage treatment plants would be veritable horns of plenty.

The undue religious leverage given to the Ganga clean up project has raised the eyebrows of many progressive minded people of the country. The real motive behind this clean-up programme became doubtful to many, with the inaugural function of the project in Varanasi, which was held with a lot of religious colour added to it. The prime minister described the Ganga as the greatest symbol of national unity, and likened its pollution to the emergence of divisive forces; the metamorphosis of the environmental project into a political programme (with religious flavour) was well evident. Scientific credibility was decisively shoved into the back seat to make room for political expediency.

While appreciating the government for taking up this scientific environmental project, we register our protest against its efforts to appropriate for itself the mantle of the preserver of 'holy' Ganga, the goddess river of Hindus.

—Sanal Edamaruku

Modern Freethinker

What should a Rationalist do ?

—M. V. RAMAMURTHY

Personally a Rationalist must be imbued with the spirit of enquiry. He is to maintain integrity of conduct and steadfastness of purpose. His sincerely shall not be allowed to be questioned. He must strive for excellence in his sphere of knowledge.

In family he shall not oppress his wife or children or parents. He is not the lord of his wife nor the owner of his children. He cannot claim proprietary rights over the person or property of the other members of his family. His attitude towards parents shall be that of reverence for age and experience and gratitude for what they have done him in the past.

The Rationalist shall not discriminate between the individuals on the basis of caste, class, creed, religion, race, rationality, sex, colour, or country of origin. Cosmopolitan outlook shall permeate the mind of a Rationalist. He fights against obscurantism, orthodoxy, and bigotry. He aims at abolition of slavery, serfdom, exploitation of person by person, and subordination of women. He has to make an effort to smash the inhibiting and constricting barriers. One has to stand out for a world order based on liberty, equality, fraternity and social justice.

In politics the Rationalist plays an important role. He strives for creating such political institutions which will guarantee individual freedom, it being harmonious and consistent with social welfare. The individual's privacy shall be secured. His right to participate in government and administration shall be respected.

In the economic sphere the Rationalist has to visualise an economy which will guarantee each individual with means of sustenance, clothing, shelter, education, health, employment, leisure and free-time for enriching his personality, accompanied by an ever-growing standard of living.

October 1986

Objectives of Scientific Education

DR. H. NARASIMHAIAH

(Former Vice Chancellor, Bangalore University)

Even the best system of education formulated on conventional principles will not be able to change the tradition bound and stagnant society. There is a lot of truth in the statement that dogmas may flourish in a university no less than in temple. It is also said that universities polish pebbles and dim diamonds; even the polishing of pebbles is doubtful. The present pattern of education is converting an uneducated superstitious person into an educated superstitious person and an illiterate communal minded person into a literate communal minded person. And we know that an educated superstitious person and a literate communal minded person are more dangerous to the society than their counterparts. Many educationists do not have a clear conception of the objectives of education.

Education should be used as a powerful means of socio-economic changes. Speaking on the role of a university, Nehru said, "a university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search for truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it will be well with the nation and the people". The noblest occupation of a university is the pursuit of truth. There is nothing too sacred for investigation or too holy to be examined. And if a university has to fulfil its obligations to society the pattern of education should be scientific and humanistic.

What shall the Rationalist Movement do? It does collectively what a Rationalist is expected to do individually. Co-operative effort leads to efficiency and speed in realization of the objectives. It creates an atmosphere conducive to the attainment of the aims and objects.

Rationalist State—2

Freethought

Joseph Edamaruku

The expression 'Free thought' is related to man's freedom itself.

The beliefs and conceptions of many are those that have been received from others without discrimination. Some people will grow furious if it is suggested that the method of freethought should be used to find out the right and the wrong out of them.

When people rejected the concept of divine right of kings, the kings and governments became angry. Many did not even dream of a social order that would do away with kings and their 'divine rights.' It was a crime to speak against the king. Though it is not illegal now to advocate free thought, the reactionaries have taken up arms against it.

Some of them say that man cannot think freely. According to them, it is impossible to know the universe in its entirety; man can know only so much as has been revealed by god. Every religion claims that it is divine revelation. Some religions go further to claim that they were founded by the representatives of god, the prophets. What was recorded in as said by the prophets, or what was written by the followers as later recorded as having been said by them are known as the scriptures. Although all of them are contradictory to one another, they are paraded as absolute truths, beyond doubts and above questioning.

There was a saying that the king can do no wrong. None shall contest, or contradict the command of the king to disobey. To disobey was treason to be punished. Priests also claim such privileges. The pope who is the head of the Roman Catholic Church once announced such a prerogative. In 1870 the then pope officially proclaimed that he had the unique

October 1986

privilege of infallibility. The Catholic Church teaches that what popes officially say will not turn out to be wrong.

The freethinkers do not accept these claims. The Catholics blindly believe that the tenets and teaching of the Church are right. The Muslims do not think that there may be errors in the Quran and the Hadiths. Many Hindus take the Vedas as absolute truth. They advance many arguments to establish their views. This is not a correct stand. Intellect must always be free for freethinkers, only those things the correctness of which we are convinced, are acceptable, whoever be the preceptor or whichever be the book that contains them. Freethinkers are not for establishing a particular view point about any subject. Be it any view, the only thing is that it must be right.

Most people like to follow the traditional path, to hail after those going in front. There is a tendency that many people repeat what men deemed to be great have said and to ape what they did, without any effort to distinguish the right and the wrong. For instance, Aristotle has written that women have only lesser number of teeth than men have. Because Aristotle was a great thinker who had contributed much to the world's knowledge and repeated it, many people believed and repeated it, though it was not right. If they had bothered to count the teeth of their own wives, they could have avoided that mistake. The story of an Indian Sanyasi is a case in point. The Sanyasi, taking his Kamandalu (a small pot like utensil) went out in the morning to take a bath. He suspected that someone might steal his Kamandalu while he takes bath in the stream. So he dug a hole in the sand, placed it in that hole and covered it. To locate the hole, he made a small mound near it. All these operations were seen by some others who also have come to the stream for bath. They thought that it was only proper to do as the Sanyasi had done, for they had great respect for him. Everyone imitated the Sanyasi. When the Sanyasi came after his bath, he found countless mounds on the bank. This kind of craze for imitation or emulation is what we see all around now-a-days.

"Because Gandhi and Tolstoy were devotees, I follow them" says one. "Marx and Lenin were unbelievers and hence I am also an unbeliever" says another. Both these patterns of thinking are erroneous. Gandhi and Tolstoy, and Marx and Lenin were men who said and did certain good things. But it does not mean that everything they said or did must be deemed correct, simply because it was said or done by them. For instance, Tolstoy was quite wayward in sexual life and was always quarrelling with his wife. Should an admirer of Tolstoy emulate him in those things?

Gandhi used to cling to unscientific ideas in his life. While he was studying in England, Gandhi ate mutton one day. During the night he thought a lamb was beating inside his stomach. Consequently he decided not to eat mutton any more. Being a member of an orthodox Hindu family, Gandhi was not used to eating meat. He got that absurd feeling, because meat eating was taboo to his mind by tradition. There are people who eat meat daily. They are not afflicted with such feelings, because they have not inherited that tradition. Blindly imitating Marx or Lenin also will entail such blunders. Marx who interpreted history in a new way wrote that it was Germany that would first witness a Socialist Revolution. But history disproved the prediction. Those who are considered great also are likely to fall into errors. So instead of imitating them blindly what one should do is to critically examine what they have said to find out the truth.

Customs, Traditions and Environment

The conceptions and religions of most people were shaped by traditions and circumstances. Those who have been unwittingly caught up in the vortex of traditions and circumstances are simply drifting. The majority of the people of India believe in this or that religion. Ask them how they happened to believe in that religion. Their religion is predetermined by the faith of their parents. There is also the institution of caste in India, which is found nowhere else in the world.

How does one happen to be a Pulaya, a Chamar, or a Brahmin? Children are born with the caste label of the parents. According to the traditional Hindu, Caste can never be changed. The minds of most of the Indians are bound by these factors.

It is easy to see that geography too has influenced the thinking and beliefs of man. Those who live in certain regions of the world have formed some conceptions closely related to those regions. The colour of people were determined by peculiar geographical factors. Ignoring this fact, certain people claim superiority on the basis of colour. This is a highly absurd view, just as the claim of racial superiority based on the Aryan, Dravidian or Mongolian origin. There are men who try to boost and blot racial pride. A large number of people have unconsciously fallen for this propaganda.

The Influence of Time

Even time exerts an influence on our way of thinking. Today it is clear to everyone that slavery is inhuman. But the great thinkers of ancient Greece or Rome could not utter a single word nor do anything against it. All enlightened people now acknowledge the equality of men and women and agree that both are endowed with abilities and the power to think. But in bygone days nobody used to think like that. The tendency of the conservatives was to oppose such equality. They employed many arguments to oppose it. They said that the majority of the statesmen, intellectuals and artistes were males. At the same time they forgot that almost all of the murderers, blackmarketeers and rapists too were males. Because women were denied freedom and because they were constrained to live without sufficient food and normal exercises, they became the weaker sex. Hence it became difficult for them to shine in the spheres of art and literature. That is a reason for the lesser incidence of criminality among women. Even among the females a great section follow the traditional idea that they are inferior than men in many respects. This is nothing but the influence of time. In the past, there were times when women were accustomed to exercise leadership in society. If any one dared to demand equality for men with women, that would have

looked impossible. Even fifty years back many Indians opposed the idea of imparting education to women. The women themselves did not think that they needed education. Even now the Muslim countries are not interested in giving education to women. When the women of Afghanistan began to go to school without paying heed to the stiff opposition of the reactionaries, a Mullah (Muslim religious scholar) himself uniquely shot at them from ambush.

Some people are against not only giving education to women, but against allowing them to mix freely with society. They compel women to hide their entire body including face in purda. A large number of women obey without any murmur. They do not even bother to think against it, because they are shackled by the social consciousness in vogue at the moment.

The sway of emotions

The emotions of love, tenderness, affection, mercy, fear etc. also hinder people to find out the truth. One is apt to accept it in toto what one's lover or sweet heart says. Lovers often do not see the realities. Similarly, some parents cannot follow the dictates of reason in matters concerning their children.

Another factor that hampers free thought is inherent inclinations. During the evolution from amoeba to man they have had to face many things good and bad. In the different stages of progress, many things that we cannot now imagine might have happened. All these have gone into the making of our propensities. Beasts will begin to eat food wherever they find it. As man is a social being he cannot do so. He knows that he has no right to appropriate the food that is prepared for others. It is his mind which advises him against that. Beasts or the primitive men were not constrained to control the sexual urges. Our tendencies are formed in accordance with those traditions. It is the social sense and discipline that teach us to cast such desires of ours. Some give a free rein to such passions. They swiftly land in dangers. What is needed is to control passions and to ponder problems calmly. It is freethought.

Is freethought impossible

We have seen that the circumstances and the human tendency for tailing after, his emotional inclinations, his inborn instincts, etc. prevent one from freethinking. Now, one might naturally grow skeptical about the feasibility of freethought. Owing to the above reasons some people assert that perfect freethought is out of question. This is an incorrect view. Even in such uncongenial or adverse circumstances, many people practise freethought, in many matters, and on the basis of enquiry, to find out new ways to progress. We call them social reformers. At least a few people are able to see the filth that has piled up in the fields of economic, political and cultural activities and point them out. Any one who lends his energies in that direction can achieve that ability. The only prerequisite is that problems should be looked at calmly and without bias.

The mentality everyone of us ought to cultivate is that of the scientist who experiments in the laboratory. He does his experiments on the basis of evidences and proofs. He is always open to correction. The knowledge of everyone of us has limitations. If we practice scientific approach in all matters, it will open up the horizons of knowledge, immensely facilitating the progress of individuals and society.

Thought-certain misconceptions

When we say think, and think freely, some misunderstandings occur to ordinary people. The reason is that some people have tried to give the word 'thought' a meaning different from its real import. God's truth, godly thought etc are expressions that are misleading. Some Hindu sanyasins advise men to contemplate Vishnu or a goddess from head to foot. They might imagine and contemplate god or goddess in the shape of some idol, or as described in some religious book. This practice leads the mind astray. This will induce people to believe in the existence of non-entities and to accept them as real occurrences. Godly thought, mystical thinking etc. fall into this category. One has to think of a topic on all its merits and demerits and consider aspects in its entirety and compare and arrive at conclusions on the basis of proofs alone. Free thought comprises this process.

Some people oppose conscience to free thought. They think mind is different from, independent of, brain. Some others consider that there exists a thing namely "soul". These are all absurd. The function of brain is called "mind". When Gaudhi said "I am doing according to my conscience", he meant only that he was doing what seems correct according to him. But our articles of faith, religious conceptions and habits do really influence our mind. It follows that thoughts are experienced by different people in different ways. To illustrate, among the Hindus, marriage between the sons and daughters of the brother and the sister are moral and permissible. There is no prick of conscience in this custom. Men of certain Brahmin sects marry their own nieces. As they believe it correct, there is no conflict of conscience. Conscience based on modern social and scientific sense prohibit such relations. There are tribes in which marriage between brothers and sisters are prevalent. Conscience do not harass them. They don't feel the quells of conscience in such matters. One who lives in the civilized society cannot even dream of that. In short, conscience is formed and changed by time, countries, customs and beliefs. Mind works in accordance with the tenets and faith of the age in which one lives. A slave was injured to feel the pricks of conscience if he did not obey the master.

Customs and beliefs and religious concepts should be made to stand aside or put in abeyance while approaching problems dispassionately and with an open mind. This is what humans ought to do. This requires a certain training. Only when we manage to do so that we become freethinkers or rationalists.

(contd, next issue)

"No god ever gave any man anything, nor ever answered any prayer at any time, nor ever will."

—Madalyn Murray O'Hair

Secularism Under Indian Constitution

Justice R.A. Jahagirdar

BEFORE CONSIDERING the topic under discussion it would be naturally appropriate to briefly notice the meaning of the word "secularism". The word is a product of the Renaissance period.

Renaissance period and secularism were not always meant the same thing to all people. As I will presently show, for the purpose of our study, it is enough to understand the word secularism as meaning something which is opposed to religion. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the word "secular" as something which is concerned with the affairs of this world, something which is worldly, not sacred, not monastic, not sacred, not monastic, not ecclesiastical. Secularism is skeptical of religious truth and is also opposed to religious education. Secularism, therefore, must mean an attitude or an approach which is concerned with the affairs of this world and which does not regard anything as not open to question. It is not concerned with monastic life or ecclesiastical doctrines. It questions the basis of religious faith and insists that the things of the flesh should not be governed by considerations of the spirit. The affairs of this world must be ordered according to the known truth and not by speculative doctrines.

In the medieval period, people who believed implicitly in religious doctrines had a tendency to be indifferent to and sometimes even to despoise/off human affairs and to meditate upon God and the afterlife. Secularism developed as a reaction to this attitude and exhibited itself in the form of humanism insisting upon the requirement that human beings alone matter during their sojourn on this earth and their welfare must be properly the concern of all human activity. The distinction between secularism and religion can to some extent be found in the Bible itself wherein it has been mentioned: "Render unto Caesar the

things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." This quotation from the Bible brings out vividly the distinction between a government concerned with the affairs of human beings and the concept of God concerned with the affairs of the other world. But unfortunately after Christianity became an established religion and organised itself into a church, successive popes insisted upon absolute power to govern the life of man in all its aspects. As a result, papal decrees governed not only the rites of the Church but also other things connected with the governance of the country. This explains the subordination of the State to the Church for several centuries till it was successfully demolished by Henry VIII of the Tudor Dynasty who had been earlier given the title of the Defender of the Faith by the then pope. One may also recall the manner in which the pope drew a line on the map of the world and allotted one part each to England and Spain for their respective conquests.

Donald Eugene Smith in his book 'India as a secular State' suggests the adoption of a working definition of a secular state. He says that "a secular state is a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion." As per his definition the concept of a secular state involves three distinct but interrelated sets of relationship concerning the state, religion and the individual. The first set the relationship between religion and the individual. The second concerns the relationship of the state and the individual and the third the relationship of the state and religion. Smith agrees that the basic assumption must be that a secular state will have nothing to do with religious affairs. For the purpose of deciding as to whether a state is a theocratic or secular state, it is enough if we find out whether the state has anything to do with religion. If it accepts a religion or religions or if it supports a religion or religions or if it incorporates in its constitution religious commands, then one can unhesitatingly dub that state as a non-secular state. If there is, what is called in American Law, a

wall of separation between the state and religion, then one might say that state is a secular state. I am for the purpose of this discussion accepting this concept of a secular state.

In Russia prior to the October Revolution there was an official church viz. Russian Orthodox Church. What was to come after the revolution was partly revealed by Lenin at the time of the Second Congress (1903) of the Communist Party. It was announced that there was to be no "established" religions or church; all religions and churches would have equal status in law. Later the theoretical discussion gradually eliminated all connection of the state and the schools from churches.

Though marriages in church are not prohibited, Russian Republic recognises only civil marriages. Later laws gave effect to Marx's principle that the removal of religions and clerical element from education was necessary for the mental emancipation of the people. Charitable activity by the church is prohibited. The church is permitted to acquire property purely for the religious purposes of the church.

It looks some what amusing that such diametrically opposed states such as the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. should be so strictly secular.

(contd. next issue)

Modern Freethinker [Monthly]

Subscription Rates

Subscribe to "Modern Freethinker" to get regularly informed rationalist views and news.

Annual Subscription (12 issues) — Rs. 12

Life Subscription — Rs. 150

Subscription Money Order may be sent to the following address:

Indian Rationalist Association
1740 A/55, Nai Wala,
Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005.

On Positive Atheism and Negative Atheism

M. V. Ramamurthy

Of late there is a tendency on the part of rationalist movement to ape religion. The fervour with which religious people act may be a desirable object of emulation but at the same time one cannot reasonably bring reason to the level of the pedestal of a deity. Reason is neither divine nor devilish. It is essentially human. The vital distinguishing features between Religion and Reason have to be noted. Religion believes in blind faith. Reason relies on spirit of enquiry. Religion divides humanity whereas Reason unites humanity on the basis of common brotherhood. Religion debases the individual. It makes him servile subordinate of the 'transcendental' being. It demands obedience and loss of freedom whereas Reason extols freedom and entices individuals to strive for it. Religion makes man ashamed of his self, whereas Rationalism wants man to adore his Self. Religion compels a man to shun happiness and wallow in misery, whereas Reason sets the laudable goal of happiness before man. One can go on a this stretch but considerations of time and space inhibit the adventure.

Thus the belief in the existence of god and Rationalism cannot coexist. Rationalism necessarily leads to Atheism. But what sort of Atheism is it? There are two kinds of Atheism—Positive and Negative. The Positive Atheist asserts that there is no god. When he makes this statement it presupposes that he has a clear conception of god. His is a sorrowful predicament for he unnecessarily invites the burden of proof. He has to prove the non-existence of god. He has to prove a negative fact. On the other hand the stand of the Negative Atheist is simple and straight, for he moves warily. He says that he is without belief in the existence of god. He puts the theist to the burden of proof. The ball is in the court of the theist. The theist is put to the impossible task of proving the existence of god. Thus the Negative Atheist is on safer and firmer ground.

October 1986

17

RATIONALISM AS A WAY OF LIFE

Varkey Shantistan

To rationalists life is a game to be played according to rules. As we sow, so do we reap. Right deeds lead to happiness just as wrong deeds lead to misery. In other words the law of causation operates as much in the moral sphere as in the material. The rationalist is alive to the limitations of birth and environment for which he is not responsible. Within the limits of these he shapes his own destiny.

The rationalist has a universal outlook because he believes in the oneness of life and unity of mankind. Therefore he tries to develop a global or cosmopolitan outlook. His standard is the standard of Time eternal and Space unlimited. Taking all humanity as one family, he cannot be antisocial but must be moral. Whatever is good for all mankind is good for him as well, and whatever is not, he must eschew. His morality is not based on religion or God but is manbound and earth-centred. He knows that anti-social deeds like theft, murder, deception, cruelty etc. donot pay to the long run. At best they are a short-cut to individual gain at the expense of society. The rationalist takes up this universal moral stand not for the sake of God or life after death but to enrich all mens lives on this earth. This stand in terms of all Time and Space is the best investment for mankind as a whole, he believes.

The rationalist is a merciless critic of religions because in them he finds the greatest amount of irrationality. The irrational beliefs and practices in religion are not only a colossal waste of time and resources, but also bring about wanton destruction of life and prosperity through religious wars and persecutions. If these huge wastes of religions are avoided mans life on earth will be richer and more abundant.

The rationalist rejects the miraculous or supernatural elements in organised religions as a bundle of stinking lies, altogether unhelpful to man. He knows that only a very small number believe them that the vast majority are quite different and even disbelieving, while just a handful with vested interests consciously and deliberately exploit the ignorance and indifference of the majority for their selfish gains.

If the lie in religion is to be detested and discarded, so should all lies in life. To justify or even rationalise one lie, be it a white lie or the so-called doctor's lie, is to justify all lies including the religious lie. Therefore the rationalist, if he is logically consistent, has to practise absolute truthfulness in word and deed.

It is maintained not only by rationalists but even by some rationalists that it is impractical and even unwise to practice hundred percent truthfulness. In a world ridden with lies and corruption, it is pointless to be honest at all times. A one-lakh bribe may bring in a one-million profit in business, while the honest business man will soon go to the wall.

They illustrate their point by means of an analogy. If all the watches in the world indicate wrong time, while your watch alone keeps correct time, you will be a fool not to adjust your watch to the other incorrect watch. If you don't, you will be out of time with men though you may be in time with the Sun. Similarly in a dishonest world you should also be dishonest. Otherwise you will be out of time, out of line. The fallacy in the analogy is obvious. If your watch does not indicate the correct solar time, but loses or gains even a minute a day, in course of time your watch will indicate Summer in Winter and Spring in Autumn. You will be completely out of season and your agriculture will come to grief. Neither nature nor life brooks a lie.

I am reminded of a story regarding one of Buddha's disciples. On one occasion, in the course of his discourse to the people a situation arose where it appeared that he performed a miracle. The disciple knew that there was no miracle, but the situation was tempting enough for him to own the miracle. Later on another occasion arose when he had to own another miracle to make up the lie of the first miracle. It went on like that, the disciple performing miracle after miracle, until one day the whole bogus edifice crashed exposing the lie in the disciple.

He who builds on truthfulness (Truth is too big and philosophical a term) builds on rock and he who deviates from it builds on shifting sands.

Locality to truthfulness is a big challenge and a great opportunity to rationalists. How does rationalism benefit the world if the righteousness of the rationalist does not exceed the righteousness of the religionist? Conformity to known facts or devotion to truthfulness is the heart and soul of rationalism, the bond of fellowship among rationalists and the characteristic feature of the rationalist way of life.

The rationalist propaganda should be the propaganda of the rose. The rose smells sweet and its fragrance attracts people inspite of its prickly thorns. The unpromising stand of the rationalist on matters of deep conviction may prick others but not hurt them if he practises the utmost humility and tolerance. Whatever is said must be said with flowers. Let the rationalist live good and true and the fragrance of his life will blow over the whole world.

October 1986

19

Bertrand Russell on Marxism

Broadly speaking, all the elements in Marx's philosophy which are derived from Hegel are unscientific, in the sense that there is no reason whatever to suppose them true.

The rationalism of Marx is subject to limitations. Although Marx holds that his interpretation of the trend of development is true, and will be borne out by events, he believes that the argument will only appeal (apart from rare exceptions) to those whose class interest is in agreement with it. He hopes little from persuasion, everything from the class war. He is thus committed in practice to power politics, and to the doctrine of a master class, though not of a master race. It is true that, as a result of the social revolution, the division of classes is expected ultimately to disappear, giving place to complete political and economic harmony. But this is a distant ideal, like the Second Coming, in the meantime, there is war and dictatorship, and insistence upon ideological orthodoxy.

E. V. Ramasamy on Brahminic strategy

One of the subtle tricks of Brahminism was to accept rationalist teachers as their own and then twist and turn their teachings to suit the undemocratic, authoritarian brahminic teachings.